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A STUDY OF FIFTY UNMARRIED MOTHERS  
RECEIVING AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN  
IN RHODE ISLAND DURING 1945.

I wish to express my appreciation for the assistance  
given me in the preparation of this thesis by members  
of the Public Assistance Staff, especially Miss  
Margaret Ward, Chief Case-Work Supervisor and Mr. Henry  
F. Burt, Supervisor of Area I.

A Thesis

Submitted by

Doris Green

(B.S., Rhode Island State College, 1938)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Work  
1947.

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STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF  
SCHOOLING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
CHILDREN

School of Social Work

May 28, 1947

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Subject A

Submitted by

John A. Brown

(1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952)

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## CHAPTER I. -- INTRODUCTION.

During 1946 seventy-one unmarried mothers were accepted for Aid to Dependent Children in Rhode Island. This group represents only those unmarried mothers who decided to keep their children and who were unable to meet their financial responsibilities without receiving Aid to Dependent Children.

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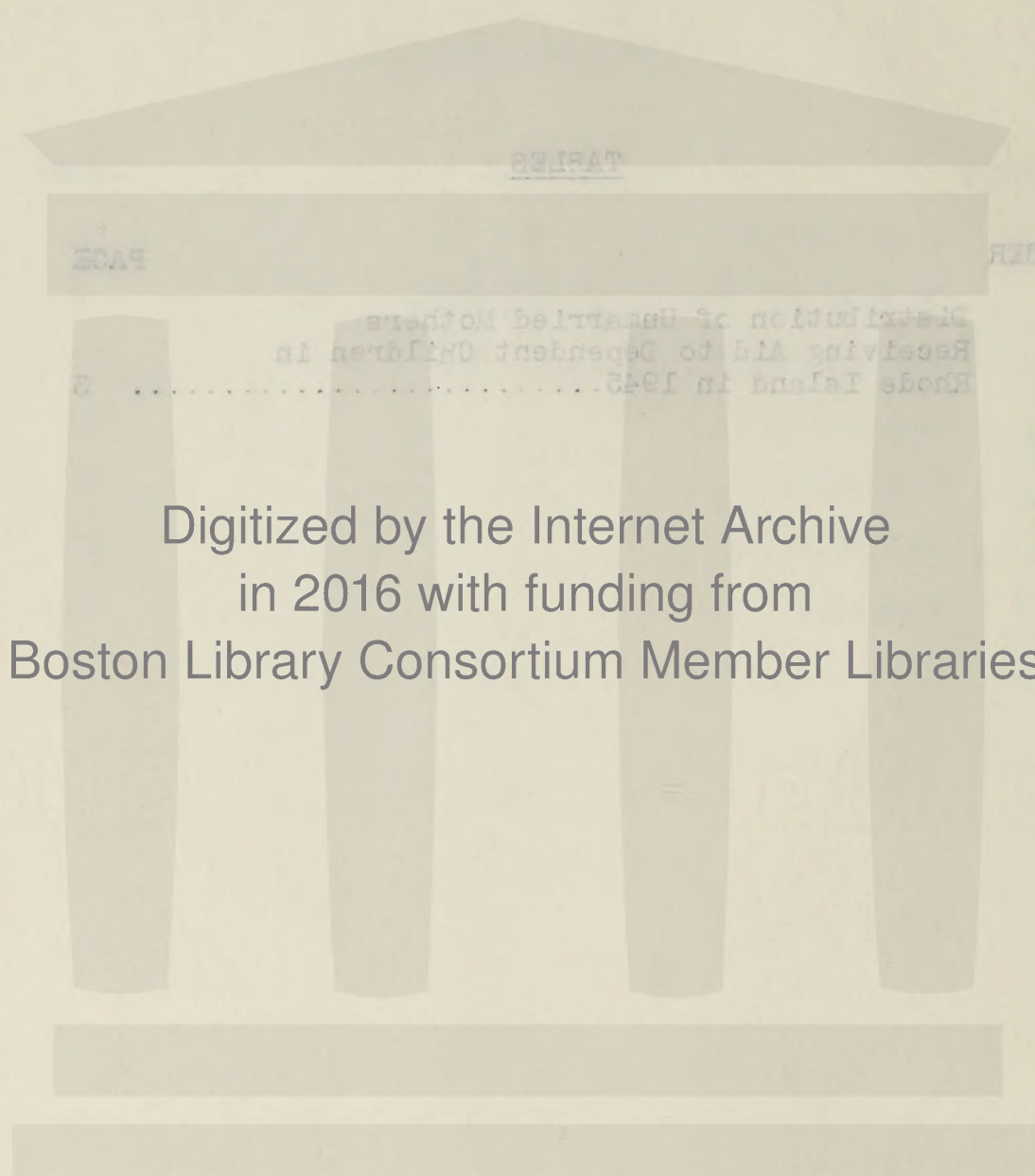
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One of the unmarried mother frequently further confuses her without solving her individual difficulties or the broader community problems. The attitude toward the unmarried mother is changing from punishment to understanding of her as a temporarily neurotic person in need of treatment.

That there is a greater need for further study of the unmarried mother is indicated by the number of these women who applied for and received Aid to Dependent Children in Rhode Island in 1946.

All of the women studied showed some maladjustment in their relationships with people. Not all this unhappiness affect only the unmarried mother; her relatives and friends were also affected. In most cases the mother told the putative father of her illegitimate pregnancy, but in other cases

1. Mary S. Brainer, "Parent-Child Relationships in Unmarried Parenthood", Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 441.



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## CHAPTER I. -- INTRODUCTION.

During 1945 seventy-one unmarried mothers were accepted for Aid to Dependent Children in Rhode Island. This group represents only those unmarried mothers who decided to keep their children and who were unable to meet their financial responsibilities without recourse to Aid to Dependent Children.

Webster refers to an illegitimate child as "one begotten and born out of wedlock" or as a child "unlawfully begotten". Some states still refer to such a child as a "bastard" rather than as an illegitimate child. Legal punishment or public censure of the unmarried mother frequently further confuses her without solving her individual difficulties or the broader community problems. The attitude toward the unmarried mother is changing from punishment to understanding of her as a temporarily neurotic person in need of treatment.

That there is a greater need for further study of the unmarried mothers is indicated by the number of these women who applied for and received Aid to Dependent Children in Rhode Island in 1945.

All of the women studied showed some maladjustment in their relationships with people. Nor did this unhappiness affect only the unmarried mother; her relatives and friends were also affected. In most cases the mother told the putative father of her illegitimate pregnancy, but in other cases

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1. Mary S. Brisley, "Parent-Child Relationships in Unmarried Parenthood", Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 440.





court procedure was used to force the putative father to support the child. Finally, the child suffers the stigma which society still places upon his head; but even more, he suffers the financial and emotional insecurity of his mother. Unless the mother marries the putative father, or some other man, at a later date, the child knows no father.

<sup>1</sup>  
Mary Brisley expresses the illegitimate child's position as follows: "the illegitimate child is prone to become one of the neurotic personalities of our time - a child subjected, of necessity, to a combination of many adverse environmental influences, which produce disturbances in a child's relation to self and others".

This study is, therefore, made for the purpose of attempting to determine; (a) what personality characteristics or environmental circumstances seemed to predispose these women to their illegitimacy; (b) what problems in treatment these women presented to the Public Assistance Agency; (c) whether or not the workers, acting within the framework of the Public Assistance Law and policy, were able to adequately meet the mother's need.

All of the seventy-one unmarried mothers accepted for Aid to Dependent Children in 1945 were single women who were at the time of study, illegitimately pregnant or had given birth to one or more illegitimate children.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.439





For administrative purposes Rhode Island is divided into five areas. These are subdivided into districts. The cases studied were selected in the following manner: The total number of cases in each area and district was listed as shown in Table I. It was decided to study fifty cases, more than one half, as an adequate sample. The number of cases selected represents five-sevenths of the total cases in each district with the exception of District Two, Area I. In order that the sample of cases studied be more representative of the entire state, the one case in district two, the rural section of Area I, was selected. So far as the writer knew, each of the seventy-one cases was representative. Thus the fifty cases studied were considered an adequate sample; also since each case was considered representative, a random sample was selected from within each area and district. Table I shows the number selected in each area and district.

TABLE I.  
DISTRIBUTION OF UNMARRIED MOTHERS RECEIVING  
AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN RHODE ISLAND IN 1945.

Area	District	Total Number Receiving	Number Selected for study.
I	I	4	2
	II	1	1
II		8	6
III	I	17	12
	II	4	3
	III	9	6
	IV	3	2
	V	14	11
IV		5	3
V		6	4
TOTAL		71	50

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**TABLE I.**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF UNMARRIED MOTHERS RECEIVING**  
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Area	District	Total	Number Selected for study
I	I	4	2
	VI	1	1
II		8	6
III	I	IV	12
	II	4	3
	III	9	6
	IV	2	2
	V	12	11
IV		3	3
V		6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>VI</b>	<b>80</b>



In Rhode Island Public Assistance is provided " to any needy individual who has not available sufficient income and resources to maintain a reasonable standard of health and well being"<sup>1</sup>. This at once places limitations upon the type of application accepted in that financial need is a basis for eligibility. Limitation is also placed upon the amount of assistance payable in that " a reasonable standard of health and well being" is interpreted by means of the "Standards of Assistance" or budget figures. Although services other than money payments are provided by the Public Assistance<sup>2</sup> policies, some clients presented only their financial need and, therefore this was the only service rendered to them. If this were the case the record contained only such factual data as would establish financial need and did not particularly apply to this study. Because of this fifteen of the fifty cases studied are not presented in Chapter Three.

One additional difficulty was encountered by the writer; because determination of financial need is the first responsibility of the Aid to Dependent Children worker, the content of the records dwelt primarily with factual material which

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1. State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Department of Social Welfare, Division of Public Assistance, Public Assistance Act of 1944, Chapter 1505, Public Laws, 1944. Approved April 23, 1944. Sec. 2.

2 R.I. Public Assistance Service Manual, Chap. I. Public Assistance Service, Page 2. "Public Assistance Service is everything we do in agency--"





would establish this eligibility, and secondly, with the client's emotional problems and their solution, Public Assistance workers do not always use process recording, therefore, even though the workers may be aware of the client's feelings and emotional reactions, these may not be recorded unless they are outstanding.

Forty-seven of the seventy-one cases were located in Providence, which has the greatest concentration of population in the State. During the war Providence became the recreational center for many service men, particularly sailors, who were stationed at the several naval bases along Narragansett Bay. Some of these sailors sought release from the strain created by war in illicit relationships with local girls.

Mrs. Brenner and Miss Young found that definite patterns of inter-family relationships were repeated in enough of the cases so that these patterns can be charted.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth E. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part I, *The Family*, Vol. XXII, No. 7, pp. 221-212, November 1941 and Part II, *The Family*, Vol. XXII, No. 8, pp. 230, December 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Leonine E. Young, "Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers", *The Family*, Vol. XXVI, No. 8, pp. 298-303, December 1945.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 297

<sup>4</sup> J. Egan and Benjamin Mandel, "Psycho-dynamic Factors in Illegitimacy", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* January 1941, p. 72

<sup>5</sup> Brenner - op.cit. p. 232





## CHAPTER II. -- SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE MATERIAL.

Studies made by Ruth Brenner<sup>1</sup> at the St. Louis Children's Aid Society and Leontine R. Young<sup>2</sup> based on her study of one hundred cases selected at random from an Unmarried Mother's Agency, revealed that the unmarried mother presents certain definite personality characteristics which have been responsible for precipitating her into the illicit sex act.

These girls are found to be of average, or above average, intelligence,<sup>3</sup> and also to have left school earlier than the average for their age.<sup>4</sup> Generally, the girls were starved for love, affection, warmth and security which had been lacking in their childhood parental relationships; thus the girls are reacting to their type of parent and to the emotional reactions of one parent to the other.

Mrs. Brenner and Miss Young found that definite patterns of inter-family relationships were repeated in enough of the cases so that these patterns can be charted.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part I, The Family, Vol. XXII, No.7, pp.221-219, November 1941 and Part II, The Family, Vol. XXII, No.8, pp.269, December 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Leontine R. Young, "Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers", The Family, Vol. XXVI, No.8, pp.296-303, December 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 297

<sup>4</sup> J. Kasanin and Sieglinde Handschin, "Psycho-dynamic Factors in Illegitimacy", American Journal of Ortho-psychiatry January 1941, p.72

<sup>5</sup> Brenner - op.cit. p. 269





Miss Young has outlined these patterns and describes the mother who was the dominant person in the home. In these homes the father was weak, or, because of the dominance of the mother separated from the children. This resulted in the daughter's considering her mother a "real person" in spite of her unconscious conflict "between her love and her hate for her mother"<sup>1</sup>. The fathers in these families were shadowy persons who had no real meaning to their daughters and were frequently idealized by their daughters.

These girls sought out in the putative father the counterpart of their father, therefore they were not interested in the putative father and their experience with him was not a happy or a satisfactory one; furthermore, the worker's attempt to force continuation of the relationship with the putative father<sup>2</sup> proved to be "irrelevant and damaging".

Kasanin and Handschin note that the girls in their study selected for the putative father of their child a man about the age of the girl's own father, or a man whom they definitely cannot marry.<sup>3</sup>

The reverse of this situation, that is the cruel, dominating father, a strict disciplinarian and the meek mother, who blindly obeyed her husband, also presented difficulty for the

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1 Young, op.cit.,p.297

2 Ibid., p.298

3. Kasanin and Handschin, op. cit., p. 73





young growing girl. These girls, also, did not have a happy home life and usually, while well aware of their fathers, resented and feared them. Often the putative father these girls sought was possessed of the same characteristics which the girl had feared in her own father.<sup>1</sup> Because their mothers were so meek they never knew true love; rather, their relationship with their mother was more of that with an older sister.

Either set of circumstances resulted in an unresolved Oedipus situation which meant that the girl was not mature enough to handle her normal sex impulses.<sup>2</sup> She thinks of love as parental love and not in the more mature manner of sharing mutual feelings and responsibilities.

Death or desertion of either parent may interfere with the normal solution of the Oedipus situation. Miss Young, in her study found that the parent who reared the girl had rejected the daughter and it was really the insecurity of the broken home and the rejection of the parent to which the girl was reacting.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Young, op. cit., p.299

2 Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part I, The Family, Vol.XXII, No.7, p. 214, November 1941.

3. Ibid., p.300

1 Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part II, The Family, December 1941, Vol.XXII, No.8, p.292.

2 Ibid., p.271.





Just as the family relationships are basic to the girl's illegitimate pregnancy, so do these same family relationships have bearing upon the type of putative father which the girl selects. Mrs. Brenner concludes that the putative father, like the mother, is seeking through the illicit sex act a solution to problems in his own family relationships. He also is emotionally immature and childlike and is threatened by a more<sup>1</sup> mature type of girl.

Because the unmarried mother is seeking a solution to her problem she submits readily to the putative father without a thought to the mores of society. She is often operating on a childlike level and is prone to fantasy; therefore she dreams up a family before her friendship with the putative father has<sup>2</sup> been established. Her pregnancy, therefore, comes to her without the usual romance and courtship. Few of the girls experienced, on a mature level, satisfaction in the sexual relationship. Few of the girls blamed the putative father for their condition. Furthermore, the majority of the girls knew very little, if anything, about the putative father and were not interested in learning more.

The general conclusion from these studies is that the girl wanted the pregnancy and the baby (for few used abortion) and

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part II, The Family, December 1941, Vol. XXII, No. 8, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 271.





used the putative father as the tool by which they could accomplish their desire. Most of the girls upon realizing that they were pregnant abruptly broke their relationship with the putative father. Some of them talked of marriage, but even when it was possible, they erected barriers against it.<sup>1</sup> They so wanted their pregnancy to be their very own, that they were not interested in bringing paternity proceedings except in a few cases in which the girls experienced a need to punish the putative father.

Whether or not the girl deliberately breaks her relationship with the putative father, they usually drift apart; therefore, during the pregnancy the girl does not experience the love and protection which the father in the normal family unit gives the pregnant mother. The girl is thus left alone with the problems of her relationships to her parents and friends, as well as the additional problems of her illegitimate pregnancy and the decision of what to do with the baby.

The community does not understand the drives responsible for the illegitimate pregnancy, therefore the community is Puritanic in its attitude toward the unmarried mother.

The mother's attitude toward the child is, therefore, influenced by the forces which caused her to be illegitimately pregnant, the meaning of the pregnancy to her and the reaction

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kassanin and Sieglinde Handschin, "Psycho-dynamic Factors in Illegitimacy", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, January 1941, Vol. XI, No. 1, p. 72.





of the community. The censure of the community seems to create or increase the mother's guilt feelings and play a part in her acceptance or rejection of the child.

Certain definite attitudes toward the child have been<sup>1</sup> observed. Kassanin and Sieglinde Handschin, from their psychiatric study of sixteen cases, found that only the most aggressive women kept their children and they did so for a definite reason. Mrs. Brenner has outlined some of the relationships of the unmarried mother to her child.<sup>2</sup> In one instance the mother regards the child as a "thing", a weapon which she wields in her battle with her parents. The baby becomes a means by which she can defy persons (parents and others) whom she hates, as well as a means by which she can secure attention and financial support from others. Again, the mother may recognize the lacks in her own childhood and attempt to obtain for the child all that was missing from her own life. This usually results in over identification with the child which is destructive for both mother and child.

If the mother's own father was cruel and domineering and rejected by her, she may attempt to deny existence of the putative father by considering herself so strong that she can be both father and mother to the child. The girl may split her

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1. op. cit., p.79

2. Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part II, The Family, Vol.XXII, No.8, December 1941, pp.272 to 274.





relationship with her mother or father into the good and the bad - the latter representing the sexual aspect of her parents' marriage.<sup>1</sup> If this is the case the child represents something "bad" which, like the mother, must be punished (either by its own mother or foster parents).

None of these attitudes are healthy for the mother or the child, since the mother rarely recognizes the child as a person with needs of its own which must be met. Treatment, therefore, is necessary to help the mother to understand her attitude toward the child and to help her to work out a realistic plan for herself and the child.

The unmarried mother not only experiences difficulty in her relationship to her parents, the putative father and the child, but also in her contact with friends. Some were not able to meet the requirements of superficial contacts, while others "did well with casual acquaintances and friends, but were unable to enter into a close or intimate relationship with anyone".<sup>2</sup> This inability to adjust also carried over into their employment. Some of the girls sought to ease their conscience by self punishment and therefore submitted to exploitation, menial employment (often below the girls' capabilities), low pay, etc. This was also prompted by a defeatist

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1. Kassanin and Handschin, op. cit., pp. 74-78

2 Leontine R. Young, "Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers", The Family, Vol. XXVI, No. 8, December 1945, p. 301.





attitude.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Brenner also points out that following pregnancy the unmarried mother, in her relationship to men, may be compared to the person suffering from shock in that she withdraws from "even a hint of danger", as well as normal social activities involving both sexes for approximately two years.<sup>2</sup> At the end of that time she was able to establish more normal relationships with people. Coincident with this was a lost interest in the child and if she had unconsciously rejected it she was more able to accept the rejection and relinquish the child.<sup>3</sup>

The earlier contact can be made with the unmarried mother the better. Her need is often so great that she is prevented from accepting assistance or driven to accept more than she can use constructively. Before any assistance can be given it is necessary to gain her confidence.

Mrs. Blethen studied the unmarried mother while she was with the maternity home ( the San Francisco Florence Crittenden Home). She found that because there is a tendency for the unmarried mother to hide away, the girl may appreciate the security and protection which the maternity home gives her, but

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1 Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part I, The Family, Vol. XXII, No. 7, November 1941, p. 215.

2 Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers", Part II, The Family, Vol. XXII, No. 8, December 1941, p. 271.

3 Ibid., p. 274.





after confinement she should be helped to return to the community as soon as she is able.<sup>1</sup> Whether she remains in a maternity home or in the community during pregnancy, she should be helped to face, realistically, the community's attitude toward her. She should also be helped to understand her relationships to her parents and others, as well as the meaning to her of the pregnancy and the child. Such understanding will help her to appreciate the child, not as a symbol of her battle with her parents, but a person with definite needs which must be met.<sup>2</sup> This has helped some girls decide to relinquish their children.<sup>3</sup> Wherever possible the girl should be treated as an adult. Stressed is the importance of realistic money planning, in which the mother's needs are taken into consideration. In order for the mother to maintain hard won emotional growth, adequate amounts for maintenance not only should be included, but for good clothes and adequate wholesome recreation, etc.

<sup>4</sup>  
Mrs. Brenner found that the illegitimate pregnancy was a shock to the mother and for this reason case work treatment was

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1 Erma A. Blethen, "Case Work Service to a Florence Crittenden Home", The Family, Vol. XXIII, November 1942, pp. 253-254.

2 Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work for Unmarried Mothers", The Family, Part II, Vol. XXIII, No. 8, December 1941, pp. 274-275.

3. Ibid., pp. 250-275  
Also, Mary S. Brisley, "Parent-Child Relationships in Unmarried Parenthood", Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, Columbia University Press, 1939, p. 442.

4. Brenner, op. cit. p. 274





most satisfactory if it continued for a period of at least two years following the mother's application and acceptance (by the home).<sup>1</sup> Mary Brisley feels that the mother is neurotic and she should be treated as such, but that this phase of the treatment may be delayed until after the child is three months old, because up to then, the emphasis rests upon "the immediate plan for the mother and child". The caseworker's responsibility is, therefore, to give the mother strength to face her problems with reality and to work out a plan which the mother can accept and be responsible for. The worker, thus, through her acceptance and understanding, provides the mother with the release from her tensions through which she may attain, by her own strength, the maturity for which she has so valiantly striven.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brisley, op. cit. p.441

<sup>2</sup> Blethen, op. cit. p.251





## CHAPTER III. - PRESENTATION OF CASES.

The study of these cases seemed to indicate that certain specific factors influenced the mothers' behavior. The cases which follow are presented from the point of view of the most outstanding single factor, such as dull mentality, poor neighborhood, complex and unhappy family relationships, etc.; in reality the underlying cause of the mothers' social behavior is usually a combination of two or more of the above factors.

Only one of the fifty women studied was tested psychometrically. She, Mary, was found to be functioning on a dull normal level; furthermore, the results of the testing indicate emotional instability. Mary was twenty-two years of age at the time of the study and the mother of two children by different fathers, both sailors. Her entire family life had been fraught with many difficulties. Her mother and father were divorced. Her mother remarried and was rearing a second family, still very young. Mary's stepfather resented the fact that she had completely disgraced the family by giving birth to two illegitimate children and the fact that she was not economically independent. Her mother attempted to protect Mary from the rebuffs of the stepfather, even at the expense of her own relationships with her husband. She recognized Mary's inabilities and continued to regard Mary as a child, incapable of assuming any responsibility.

When Mary's second child was a year old she applied for





and received Aid to Dependent Children. This seemed to appease the stepfather and thus made the family situation more tolerable.

Mary's pregnancies seemed to represent her effort to punish both her stepfather for his attitude toward her and her mother, who, of necessity, was dividing her attention between Mary and the younger children in the home. She knew little of the fathers of her children and showed no interest in paternity proceedings. She completely rejected her children and expressed a desire to leave them in the care of her mother while she worked.

Although extremely unhappy in her parents' home, she continued to remain there until the pressure became so great that she sought escape in marriage. This marriage represented a childish attempt to secure the love, appreciation and security which was so lacking in the home of her stepfather. Mary said her husband had been a childhood sweetheart, although she showed little love for her husband.

In five other instances the workers felt that the women were operating on a dull normal or below average level of intelligence and that this bore some relationship to the illegitimacy.

Alice, negro, 18 years of age, was the mother of a daughter, two years of age. Alice stated she never knew her father since her parents separated when she was a baby. Her mother





worked to support the family, therefore Alice was left in the care of her two older brothers. She received little or no supervision and roamed the neighborhood at will. She met the putative father at a carnival and saw him over a period of five to six months, but the friendship terminated when she became pregnant. Because of her pregnancy she left school in the eighth grade to enter a maternity home. After her confinement she returned home, secured private employment and boarded the baby. She applied for and received Aid to Dependent Children when a boarding home no longer could be located. Alice was unable to manage financially and at the end of the study had contacted a child-placing agency and was awaiting placement of the child so that she could return to work.

It is evident that although Alice had decided before she left the maternity home to keep her child, she was either directly rejecting the child or using it as a means of avenge for her long neglect by her mother, who, incidentally, felt responsible for her daughter's present plight.

Louise, 25, also has a daughter two years of age. At the age of sixteen she began to work in a local hospital where she worked in various capacities. Her employment was very irregular, as she was admitted several times to the hospital for observation or treatment of an abdominal infection. She seemed completely apathetic and to enjoy the dependence upon her mother, as well as the security which her mother's home and Aid

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to Dependent Children offered. This lack of emotional reaction was also true concerning the putative father of her child, who was a married man whom she met at work and who refused to admit paternity. She seemed to desire to remain on a child-like level, as indicated by her frequent hospitalization and her desire to keep the child in her mother's home where she could receive continued attention through the child.

Gladys was thought to have a low level of intelligence. Her mother, dependent upon Public Assistance since 1930, is known to be feeble minded and to have had several illegitimate births. At the time Gladys applied for assistance she was living at home with her mother, an older sister and an aunt, who died during this study. The older sister had been supporting Gladys and the one child at home until she became unemployed, at which time Gladys applied for and received Aid to Dependent Children.

There was a great deal of bickering among the members of the family and especially between Gladys and her mother. The entire family were unable to accept responsibility for their welfare and resisted any attempts of the agency to assist them in becoming independent. All members of the family sought refuge in illness and refused to accept needed medical care.

Gladys had two illegitimate children; a girl two years of age and a boy, one year. The putative father of the first child was a sailor whom she had picked up and the putative





father of the second child was a civilian. She refused to discuss these men who seemed to represent the tool by which she could accomplish her unconscious wish to have a baby; furthermore, the first child (cared for by her mother) represented a weapon by which Gladys could punish her mother. The second child does not appear necessary for the purpose as it was placed with a Godmother immediately after birth. Gladys so suppressed the existence of this child that it is impossible to give her motives for the rejection.

Dorothy, 26, is, herself, illegitimate. She was adopted but later rejected by her adoptive mother (father had died) because of her low level of intelligence. During the ten years the family were known to Public Assistance, both women sought attention from the agency by constant complaining, irregular employment, etc. Dorothy used illness as an escape from the unhappiness and rejection at home, but showed definite improvement parallel to the attention received at clinics. Nothing is known of the father of the first child. The putative father of the second was reported to be a naval officer, who apparently took advantage of Dorothy's low intelligence.

On several occasions she was encouraged to have psychometric tests but refused. She seemed to be sufficiently aware of her mental limitations to shy away from the consequences of the psychometric tests.

Dorothy seemed to use the children as a method of retal-





lation against her rejecting mother; also as a means of obtaining attention for herself as evidenced by the satisfaction she received from her deceit of her mother, who was not aware of her condition until after she had given birth,unattended, to the second child.

Rose is 27. Her mother's death was followed by her father's remarriage, which upset Rose. She remained at home, however, as housekeeper for her two older brothers. Both had left the home, one having been inducted into the army and the second left the home following an argument,hence the application for Aid to Dependent Children.

The putative father of the child is also a service man who is married and who will not admit paternity. Rose declared her love for him in spite of his desertion. She is entirely complacent concerning her illegitimacy, which seems to represent alliance with her deceased mother. In spite of the fact that she is apparently dull,mentally, she is well able to plan for the baby. For these reasons upon the birth of the baby Rose appears to relax and to enjoy to the fullest extent her new found maturity.

Included in the study is Lillian, who had received psychiatric treatment for a diagnosis of conversion hysteria. Born in Vermont, she lived in poor circumstances until she was eight years of age, when her mother died. Since her father was reported to be a disreputable character who had deserted,Lillian





became a State Ward. Although she was placed in a foster home, it became necessary in 1939, because of her neurotic symptoms, to place her under the care of a Children's Agency in Boston. Here she received psychiatric treatment which was successful. In 1943, when she was discharged from the care of the agency, she came to Rhode Island to live with childhood friends. These friends resided in an isolated section and it was necessary for her to move to the city to obtain employment. Thus, after living in a sheltered and supervised environment the greater part of her life, she now found herself entirely independent.

She stated she and the putative father had planned to be married but when she became pregnant he revealed that he was already married. Through his legal wife, Lillian was supported during pregnancy and the putative father continued to contribute six dollars a week after her confinement, which was supplemented by Aid to Dependent Children.

She experienced strong guilt feelings concerning her pregnancy and in order to escape the censure of her friends, she re-established herself in a large city. Advice was sought from the psychiatrist who had treated her. He felt that her pregnancy would have a procreative meaning to her, therefore she should be allowed to keep the baby. After a difficult decision she did keep the baby and established a home for it. She considered herself "bad" and dreamed of creating the per-

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fect child - the opposite of herself. She said she wanted the child to accept the reality of its birth, but in so saying, seemed to be postponing the acceptance for herself, as well as purging herself of guilt by transferring these guilt feelings upon the child, thus also punishing the child.

She seemed unable to establish a strong or lasting friendship with anyone, but at the same time she enjoyed a superficial friendship with two older neighbors who served as mother substitutes.

Many of the women had grown up in a poor neighborhood, characterized by inadequate housing and little opportunity for wholesome recreation. The exact number of women who grew up with these neighborhood conditions prevailing is not known, because only those conditions which were particularly bad, or for some other reason bore some relationship to the problem, were recorded in the Aid To Dependent Children case record. The workers felt that these conditions were at least partially responsible for the conflict which Alice is attempting to solve through illegitimate pregnancy. There were two cases in which poor environment is especially stressed:

Rena, negro, age 20, lived in an extremely poor neighborhood. The house which was in poor condition was surrounded by business establishments, cafes and barrooms. It is assumed that she is an illegitimate child since she makes no mention of a father. Because her mother is married and has a large

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family, Rena is living with grandparents who are completely baffled by Rena's behavior, nor could they bear the expense of Rena and her baby. Public Assistance was, therefore, granted in 1944. In 1945 Rena was transferred to Aid to Dependent Children.

Rena had sexual relations with the putative father of her child ( he was three years younger than she) since she was fourteen years of age. Both Rena and the putative father had unhappy home lives and it seemed that both used intercourse in a futile attempt to satisfy each other's need for affection and a feeling of belonging, which they did not have at home. The couple talked a great deal of marriage, in spite of the fact that Rena said the putative father beat her. The Juvenile Court, who heard the case on charges of non-support of the child, felt the couple should not be married and ordered them not to see each other. During the short separation Rena began visiting neighborhood cafes seeking entertainment. Both Rena and the putative father accused each other of jealousy and promiscuity and neither seemed to be able to accept the reality of life.

Christine, age 20, was living at home with her mother, a domineering person, and a younger brother. Neither Christine nor the brother received love or understanding from their mother. An older brother had been emancipated from the home through his induction into military service. This older bro-

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Christine, age 30, was living at home with her mother, a dominating person, and a younger brother. Neither Christine nor the brother received love or understanding from their mother. An older brother had been emancipated from the home through his induction into military service. This older pro-



ther accepted Christine as a responsibility, but she, on the other hand, seemed to be envious of his independence of the domineering mother. Her pregnancy may represent her alliance with the older brother, as well as a way of punishing her mother for the strict supervision of the home. She was immature and the worker seemed to feel she experienced in fantasy only some of her "escapades" with service men. After the birth of her child, however, she continued to frequent cafes and entertain service men. When questioned she stated she was actually seeking inexpensive, wholesome recreation which might be shared with her friends. Actually the cafes and service men were the only diversions which her undesirable neighborhood could offer.

Let us now review some cases in which the interplay of family relationships provided the cause or predisposing factor of the illegitimacy.

Phyllis was thirty-three years of age when she applied for assistance and was at the time the mother of five illegitimate children. Her mother had separated from her husband and had given birth to two illegitimate children at a time when Phyllis was well able to remember the experience. She was fond of her mother and the worker felt that a partial explanation of her illegitimate pregnancy rested in the fact that Phyllis was over-identifying with her mother.

The putative father of the first three children was a married man with whom she had lived for several years. Nothing





is known of the father of the fifth child. Phyllis occasionally sees the father of the fourth child, a married man. She shows no particular feelings for any of these men. The second and fifth children were placed for adoption at birth, although the first, third and fourth children were accepted by Phyllis and given excellent care. The reason for the distinction is not clear from the record. She was well able to maintain a home and adequately plan and care for her children. She was a steady worker, both as a domestic and in the mill. At the end of the study she died of tuberculosis.

Doris is 32. She has had regular relationship with the putative father since the age of 17. The putative father was a sixty-nine-year old friend of the family who drank heavily and was very demanding and abusive of Doris. Nothing is known of her father, but since this man is so aged we may assume he represents a father person to her. As a result of her relationship with the putative father, she has submitted to six abortions and has had two confinements, all financed by the putative father, although she received no regular support from him.

Although Doris remains at home with her mother, she hates her mother and seeks to demonstrate this hatred by forcing the mother to care for the children. These children were not only rejected by their mother, but also by their grandmother, to the extent that the oldest was found to be suffering from

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malnutrition.

Doris worked irregularly. During the periods she did work she supported her mother and the children. When placed on probation she was found to be a heavy drinker, unreliable, dishonest, promiscuous and a sex pervert with homosexual tendencies.

Insecurity had always been present in the life of Eleanor, 29. In 1933 her parents separated. This had upset her. Her father died in 1936. The family also suffered economic insecurity and Public Assistance was given in the form of Work Relief (with Eleanor assigned to the Work Relief project). Her mother regarded Eleanor as a child - incapable of assuming responsibilities, or of being a mature adult. Eleanor showed no outward resentment, although she had long sought escape in the form of nervousness and concentration on a dog bite suffered six years previously. She claimed she was raped immediately following the first meeting with the putative father. Her pregnancy only furthered her feelings of insecurity. She was fraught with guilt feelings and invented elaborate schemes, including the purchase of a wedding ring, in an attempt to convince her friends and neighbors that she was married.

She rejected the child before birth and attempted to work out placement plans. However, when twins were born to her, she became calmer, kept the children and gave them a great deal of good care. Both Eleanor and her mother had long used complaining about Public Assistance as a means of compensating for

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their inferiority feelings and getting attention. The twins are currently replacing other means of obtaining this much longed for attention and also give prestige.

Elaine, one of seven children, gave birth to a daughter at nineteen years of age. The family have been dependent upon Public Assistance since 1931. Although Elaine entered private employment at sixteen, she worked little as she was sickly.

The putative father of Elaine's child had been a neighbor in 1940 and their friendship had continued for two years at the end of which time, she claimed, he forced sexual relationship upon her. She was angry with him and sought to force him to support her and the child through legal procedure, but she dropped her charges when he denied paternity and joined the Navy. She seemed to be striving for happiness, security and emancipation from her family which she imagined marriage would give her. During the time she was known to Aid to Dependent Children, she had two love affairs which she tried to push through to marriage. One was with a man who was serving a jail sentence and the other a bus driver whom she met while going to the prison to see the first man. Both of these affairs seemed to rest more in the realm of fantasy than reality. She seemed proud that she was able to bear a child, but seemed to regard the child as a possession, the first which she ever had for her very own.

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Three years after the birth of Elaine's child and after her mother's case was closed on Aid to Dependent Children, it became clear that Elaine really hated her mother and wanted to be emancipated from the home. A bitter Battle ensued in which the mother tried to keep Elaine at home and under her domination, saying Elaine was immature and not able to establish a home by herself. The siblings, feeling the mother was showing Elaine discrimination, aligned themselves against both Elaine and her mother.

Finally the mother allowed Elaine to establish herself in a light housekeeping apartment. Elaine was successfully able to accept the many responsibilities involved. Furthermore, she seemed able to utilize constructively the supervision offered by the worker. The feud between Elaine and her mother, however, was far from ended and she wished to flaunt before her mother her independence, since she moved nearer to her mother's home as she became more competent. As she became better adjusted in her own home she placed less and less emphasis on ill health which had been used as a method of securing attention.

Audry was one of ten children of a Portugese family who had always lived on marginal income. At her parents' bidding Audry left school at sixteen to work in the local mills, but finally defied her father by leaving home to enroll in a course of practical nursing, followed by experience in the field, which she followed with greater regularity than mill





work and from which she derived satisfaction. The entire family seemed to fear the father and went to great lengths to protect each other from his brutality. Audry's mother gave her money with which to pay board until Aid to Dependent Children could be given - this in an attempt to convince her father that Audry was married and supported by her husband.

The putative father, a serviceman who was married, had no interest in Audry or the baby, although he did allow the baby's birth to be registered in his name.

Audry seemed to feel a great deal of resentment toward her father which was veneered by a docile attitude when in his presence. She seemed so completely bewildered by the tensions and over crowding in the home (from which she had been away for a number of years) that she was unable to express any definite feelings toward her child. It almost seems as though by returning to her father's house she is seeking to punish herself for her misdemeanor.

Sylvia, age 21, Italian, had known the putative father of her child for a number of years before he entered military service and was ordered overseas. In spite of their fondness for each other, marriage was not planned. This friendship and that which Sylvia had enjoyed with the parents of the putative father, was abruptly broken when they learned of her illegitimate pregnancy. Her father, who dominated his household, bore the expense of the confinement and then tried to work out

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plans whereby the baby would be placed. When this could not be accomplished, he allowed Sylvia and the baby to return to his home temporarily, only after Aid to Dependent Children had been granted for their board. Her father punished her by not allowing her to care for the baby and otherwise trying to keep her a little girl.

She childishly fought against the rejection of the parents of the putative father by trying to hurt them (pressing paternity proceedings) and against her father by refusing to relinquish her child (hence her insistence upon establishing a home for herself and baby).

Helen, Italian, was twenty-three years of age at the time of application for Aid to Dependent Children for herself and daughter, age one year. Until her pregnancy she had lived at home (the oldest of eight children) worked steadily and contributed to the home all of her earnings except five dollars weekly allowed her for her personal expenses. When she became illegitimately pregnant she was punished by being forced to leave the home and not allowed to return. She then went to her married sister with whom she quarrelled a great deal.

Helen met the putative father, a serviceman, on a pickup, which she admits represented an inexpensive way of obtaining recreation.

She was ambivalent and at times felt powerful and independent, but was predominately immature and dependent upon her

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She was ambitious and at times felt powerful and independent, but was predominantly insecure and dependent upon her



mother, or the mother substitute, such as the sister with whom she lived. She had harbored a deep resentment towards the family for their rejection of her and expressed this through abusive domination of other people. She seemed to be running away from this rejection and also from her guilt feelings by occasional concentration upon ill health from which she rapidly recovered, given a reasonable amount of attention.

Sarah, Portugese, age 24, the mother of a year old daughter, was immature and dependent. She enjoyed the security of her position as housekeeper in her father's home. She is small, frail and suffered from a spinal defect. Although it is not too clearly brought out in the record, Sarah seemed to be over-identifying with her married sister, therefore the putative father, about whom she knew little, seemed the tool by which she, in fantasy, could be the equal of her sister. Her position as housekeeper in her father's home lent reality to her fancied family group.

Florence was thirty-six years of age when her son was born and forty-five years of age when she applied for assistance. Because her father died when she was fourteen years of age Florence went to work to support her mother and six brothers and sisters. Since the birth of her child Florence has been dominated by her feeling of guilt. She has told the neighbors, and the child, that his mother is her sister. Although she gives the child good, physical care, he is reacting

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to her rejection by nervousness to the point of illness, for which there is little physical foundation. Because of her feelings of rejection and her need for continued deceit, she is unable to give the child the security and love which he needs. She also has the tendency to compensate for her feelings toward the child by being indulgent and lenient with him.

Dolores was twenty-four years of age at the time of her application and the mother of two children, a girl five years and a boy three. Her application for Aid to Dependent Children was accepted in 1944 and reopened in 1945 when she was ordered by Court to establish and maintain a home for her children. Her mother and older sister had always dominated her. When she defied them to the extent that they were no longer able to control her, she was placed in Homes for Wayward Girls. She defied the authority of these homes as she had that of her mother and later when the Court ordered her to maintain a home for herself and the children apart from her mother, she returned to her mother's home, rather than meet the Court order. She had been promiscuous over a period of years and was very restless and unable to follow any given plan; nor did she experience any ability or desire to learn by her mistakes.

Elizabeth was twenty-two when she gave birth to her daughter. She was taught by her Italian father that it was not necessary for girls to work; hence her willingness to

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accept financial dependence. There was a close bond between her and her father which was broken when he remarried in 1938. Because she feared her father's censure, she told him she was married. Later, when her true position was revealed, through a family quarrel, she received a great deal of temporary acceptance. She is emotionally unstable in everything she does. She left school, returning later; worked irregularly; moved from one relative's home to another so rapidly that the worker was unable to contact her for weeks at a time; she alternated between periods of high enthusiasm and depression. She was defiant of authority. The baby was a tool with which she could secure attention for herself.

Grace, although she gives the appearance of being childish and immature, says that her pregnancy was an expression of her resentment toward her family. She states that she and the putative father were friendly since they went to school together, but her family refused to allow her to see him, stating she was too young for courtship. Her feeling toward him strengthened when he was convicted of murder. She is experiencing a great deal of conflict and guilt regarding her pregnancy and this seems to interfere with her feelings toward the child. To the end of the study she has not worked out any plans satisfying to her.

Evelyn is the mother of two children - a boy, age twelve and a girl, age seven. Her parents felt she had committed a





crime for which she must be punished and proceeded to do so by refusing to allow the children to come to the home. Her own need for censure and her relationship with her parents were sufficiently strong so that she was able to accept this attitude as just punishment for her "wrong". She longed to have her children with her and finally, when the children needed to be placed in a new foster home, she seized upon this opportunity to satisfy her longing for her children. She gave up her employment and established a home - since her parents still refused to allow the children in their home - and accepted Aid to Dependent Children so that she might provide for her family.

The first few weeks with her children she felt insecure and showed poor planning ability. As she became better adjusted with her children and more free from emotional tension, she was able to drop the bravado and impulsiveness which had characterized her early behavior. She transferred her previous dependence upon her parents to an uncle who did not censure her. This seemed to give her the strength she needed to accept, for the first time, her illegitimacy since she was now able to tell her friends of the children.

Josephine, age 22, is the youngest of four children. She was sickly as a child and required a great deal of attention. She had been indulged by her parents and at the same time kept dependent upon them. She left school at the age of sixteen because she wanted to do so. She turned in all of her earn-





ings to her parents, who in turn, supported her.

The putative father is a sailor, who for six years prior to Josephine's pregnancy, had been welcomed in the home by all members except Josephine's brother, who disliked him. Her relationship with the putative father seems to be her way of attempting to force her parents into allowing her the same privileges given her older sisters who are both married. The putative father refused to admit paternity, which left Josephine bewildered and crushed by the experience. She is retaliating by trying, through every means possible, to force the putative father to admit paternity and support the child.

Josephine gives the child good care and appears to love it. Because she stresses the child's resemblance to the putative father, the writer feels that she is using the child as a means of self punishment; also, through the child, she is seeking to maintain her role of "little girl" which she enjoyed.

Ann, 29, is the oldest of a family of six living children. At fourteen, because of the family finances, she was forced to leave school and secure work in a jewelry firm. She disliked this work. In 1936 when at the age of 29, she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, she was expelled from her home. For the next several years she spent most of her time and effort attempting to obtain support from the putative father, who contested her charges and finally succeeded in evading them, and also tried repeatedly to secure Public

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Ann, 22, is the oldest of a family of six living children. At fourteen, because of the family finances, she was forced to leave school and secure work in a jewelry store. She disliked this work. In 1935 when at the age of 22, she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, she was expelled from her home. For the next several years she spent most of her time and effort attempting to obtain support from the putative father, who contested her charges and finally succeeded in evading them, and also tried repeatedly to secure Public



Assistance in another city, but was denied because she did not have residence in that city. Her shame concerning her child prevented her from returning to her home city where she would be eligible for Public Assistance, or from working out a constructive plan for herself and baby. The result was that she spent long years living for short intervals with friends who were not entirely interested in her.

By the time she was accepted for Aid to Dependent Children, she had developed a very inferior personality and seemed to experience guilt feelings in all of her activities. In addition, she was insecure in her relationships with the exception of that with her daughter. She controlled and dominated the child and found it difficult to allow the child any freedom whatsoever. The worker made arrangements for the child to go to Summer Camp but Ann was unable to allow the separation, although she had begun to be able to accept some recreation accompanied by her daughter.

<sup>1</sup>  
Ruth Brenner feels that the girl who is able to take herself completely out of her home and community is not only possessed of hidden strength, but also stands a better chance of making a satisfactory adjustment. The one woman in the study who had established herself far from home seemed to experience some temporary difficulty in adjustment at the time of

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth F. Brenner, "Casework Service for Unmarried Mothers", The Family, Vol. XXII, No. 7, pp. 211-219, November 1941.

As a result of this, she was denied admission and did not have residence in that city. Her family connections were such that she was prevented from returning to her home city where she would be eligible for Public Assistance, or from working out a non-constructive plan for herself and family. The result was that she spent long years living for about intervals with friends who were not entirely interested in her.

By the time she was accepted for aid in September 1941, too, she had developed a very limited degree of activity and seemed to experience little feeling in all of her activities. In addition, she was concerned in her relationship with the expectation of that with her daughter. She controlled and controlled the child and found it difficult to allow the child any freedom whatsoever. The worker made arrangements for the child to go to Summer Camp but she was unable to allow the child to go, although she had begun to be able to accept some restriction accompanied by her daughter.

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Little is known of the putative father of Rita's child. She is not interested in him and is not undertaking paternity proceedings. When she realized she was illegitimately pregnant, she left home to spare her family the shame of her illegitimate pregnancy and also to escape the censure which she knew her family would heap upon her. Just why she came from Wisconsin to Rhode Island is not known. When she arrived in Rhode Island, however, she boarded in a private home and worked until just prior to confinement, when she entered a private maternity home. She was basically mature and able to plan for herself, although she seemed dazed and bewildered by the far reaching meaning of her pregnancy. She is being helped in this and in the plans for the child by the social service department of the maternity home. She experienced difficulty in accepting Aid to Dependent Children (for hospitalization only) since Public Assistance seemed to undermine her sense of independence and self confidence which she needed so badly at this time.

Five of the women in the study were reared by others than their own parents. Two of these women, Lillian and Dorothy, were discussed on pages 21 and 20, respectively. The three remaining cases follow:

Esther was placed in a foster home by her mother who deserted her when she was fourteen months old. The foster





parents reared her but did not adopt her. When Esther was six years of age the foster parents had a child of their own. From that time on she felt rejected, although she remained in the home until she was seventeen, when she left to live in a rooming house and worked as a waitress. She was lonesome and totally unprepared for this type of life. When she became friendly with a man who lived in the same rooming house she was willing to live with him as his wife. When she became pregnant he revealed that he was absent without leave from the Navy and also was married. He chose to return to the Navy but begged her to keep the baby and he would obtain a divorce and marry her. Although Esther seemed fairly mature in laying her plans in accordance with his request, she is not realistic in her attitude toward the putative father; rather, she regards him as the ideal lover. Her childlike faith in him has blinded her to the seriousness of her situation. The fact that she was unable to reveal her situation to her foster parents is indicative of her shame.

Catherine, age 21, was deserted by her parents when a small child and was reared by a strict aunt. The record does not clearly indicate the circumstances leading up to the illicit relationship with the putative father, who was married and in the Navy. Her relationship with the putative father seems to have given her a great deal of satisfaction and to have compensated for some of the unhappiness of her childhood.





Although she says she loves him deeply, she seems to have used the putative father as a means of obtaining a baby by which she could convince her aunt that she was truly a mature person and forever punish her for her strictness.

When she announced her pregnancy, she and her aunt fought a duel for supremacy which lasted for several months and resulted in a victory for Catherine. Her aunt began punishing her by ordering her out of the home to "have a hard time". This did not seem to upset Catherine, who acted out her belief that if she "proved sorry" her aunt would take her back into the home. In the meantime her aunt's punishment quelled whatever guilt feelings she had.

When Aid to Dependent Children was granted she did return to her aunt's home. Acceptance by the worker and re-acceptance by the aunt gave Catherine the security and confidence in herself which she needed and at the end of the study she was planning to complete the emancipation from her aunt by establishing a home for herself and baby. Furthermore, in these plans she is showing a deep love for her child and an ability to accept responsibility.

Yvonne, age 21, is a negro girl. While she was still a child her parents separated and she was brought up in Oklahoma by her grandmother. Her relationship to her grandmother is not known. In 1943, after the death of her grandmother, Yvonne came to Rhode Island with a friend who has since left the State.

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At the time of her acceptance for Aid to Dependent Children she had been living with friends whom she had known for two years.

She seemed to live in a world of fantasy. The putative father is one of many sailors with whom she had been friendly. She stated she believed she was married to the putative father but did not seem disturbed when he told her he was already married. He had fulfilled her needs as she took no legal steps to obtain support for herself or child. Her fantasy is completed since she lives with friends who accepted her. Thus she enjoys the freedom and satisfaction of home life without responsibility for the home.

Eight of the fifty women studied lived with the putative father for varying periods, but did not marry. Esther, one of this group, has already been discussed on page 38. Adele will be discussed later as her problems are particularly indicative of one effect of unmarried parenthood upon the children. The remaining six cases follow:

Mildred, 33, was the mother of three children, ages thirteen, eleven and seven. She lived with the putative father from 1931 to 1945 when she ordered him from the home because of his alcoholism. Until he left the home the putative father had supported the family inadequately. Mildred was keenly aware of her lack of legal status and was willing to marry the putative father for the protection of the children.

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However, when marriage was planned with the help of a Family Case Worker, it was learned that the putative father was not legally divorced. After Mildred ordered the putative father from the home she was very fearful that his parents would revenge her by disclosing her marital status to the children, therefore she would have attempted to escape by moving to another locality if she had had available funds.

Given Aid to Dependent Children she demonstrated good planning ability. She needed a great deal of reassurance in order to be able to overcome her fears and guilt feelings, but as she became more secure in her position as head of the family, she was again able to recognize her positive feelings for the putative father by allowing him to visit the children. The positive and continuing relationship with the worker seemed to be the basis for her improvement.

Pearl's mother died when Pearl was sixteen years of age. This meant that she was forced into the mature role of mother to her five younger brothers and sisters at a time when she was not emotionally able to handle the problem. Her father was an authoritative person whom she felt did not understand her. From the beginning she acted out a child's incestuous fantasy toward her father. From the beginning, also, sex actually was something evil to be punished as she was sentenced to a girl's correctional school because of sex activity with her brother. Several years later she met the putative father

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in a cafe at a time when she was discouraged with her home life and disappointed as the result of a love affair. Small wonder, then, that she considered the putative father, who had established her in a furnished room, as the ideal lover. Although she urged him to marry her, he refused. When he was transferred overseas he succeeded for many months in evading her continuous efforts to contact him.

For a time she returned home and accepted the abuse of her father as just punishment. She seemed to be striving for emotional maturity and independence and throughout the period of study she experimented with first one plan, then another. Each failure brought deeper frustration and made it more difficult for her to successfully work through a realistic plan.

She succeeded in making several near reconciliations with the putative father but with each failure she flayed him through her letters, as an angry child strikes at a frustrating object or person.

In addition to the imagined security and protection which marriage to the idolized putative father would give her, she seemed to be seeking a mother person. At the end of the study, in an attempt to obtain both, she left for California to visit the mother of the putative father.

Throughout all of her struggles she clung desperately to her child, which seemed to represent a symbol of her relationship to the putative father.





Beatrice, 24, and the mother of a daughter two years of age, was bewildered by her experience and was unable to make any plans for herself or child. She was unhappy at home and fearful of her father. In the putative father she seemed to be seeking the ideal father person who would be kind, loving and indulgent to her. Actually, the man she chose was as cruel and abusive to her as her own father. The putative father wanted to marry her but she was not interested and continually prevented this. She was so fearful of her father that she could not tell him she was not married. Her confusion showed up in her inability to form a satisfactory relationship with anyone. She was unable to cooperate with the agency worker and seemed to grow more and more tense after the putative father returned from military service and it became increasingly necessary for her to devise additional means of deceiving her father.

Hattie lost her mother through death at the age of fifteen. She was not able to accept her mother's death and since she secured no comfort from her non-understanding and strict father, she ran away from home. The putative father with whom she lived as common law wife was a replica of her father. He deserted regularly, supported inadequately and was selfish in his demands upon her. She was fearful of him and was not able to reveal her true marital status until after he died in 1944.

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She kept a very untidy house. Financially she lived from day to day, even while she was receiving Aid to Dependent Children regularly. She gave her two children, ages three years and two months, as good care as her way of living permitted. She was completely satisfied with her way of living and rejected attempts to improve her ability to manage and to care for the children.

Blanche, 35, made application for Aid to Dependent Children in 1940 for herself and four year old daughter. At that time she was living at home and seemed completely dominated by her parents. A home was established for her and her child, but although she moved into the home, she left the child in her mother's home, indicating through the child that she was punishing her mother for dominating her childhood.

Blanche did not return to her family in 1940 but began to live with the putative father of her second child, born in 1942. When she reapplied in 1945 she stated she had been married but was unable to present satisfactory verification of her statements. She refused to discuss the putative father or to start non-support proceedings.

Both these experiences created many guilt feelings which she relieved by rationalization through the falsification of stories concerning her marriage. Throughout her contact with the department she seemed totally unable to accept responsibility for her behavior and unable to face reality.

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Stella, 22, is the mother of one illegitimate child, four years of age and, during the study, was pregnant with her second child. Her mother was a very dominating person and allowed her children no freedom whatsoever. In spite of this there seemed to be a strong tie between Stella and her mother. Stella had lived in the sheltered environment of an institution from the birth of her first child until 1945 when she and her mother re-established a home. A boy, equally as unprepared for life as she, began living in the home and became the father of her second child. The couple talked of marriage and would have completed their plans had not the putative father been sentenced for larceny to a boys' training school. Stella seemed more relieved than upset by this intervention in her marriage plans.

For several months the relationship between Stella and her mother was one of mutual punishment. Stella refused to allow her mother to manage the Aid to Dependent Children payments made to her. Considering her inexperience, she demonstrated remarkable ability to plan well. In return for the support with which Stella supplied her mother, she imposed the care of the child upon her. The mother, in turn, seemed to keep alive the stigma of Stella's behavior by her presence in the home. At the end of the study there is indication that the mother is tired of being saddled by the care of the child and wishes to leave the home. Stella seemed to be receiving

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an increasing amount of satisfaction from her children and therefore to be losing her compulsive need to be the head of the household ( her need to support her mother). She was beginning to discuss with the worker and her mother plans for the mother's return to private employment.

Closely related to this group were three women who not only lived with the putative fathers of their children, but finally successfully completed their plans for marriage. One, Mary, was discussed on page 16. She seemed to accept marriage as the easiest way out for her, although she had no conception of the responsibilities of marriage.

Jennie, age nineteen, was married soon after the birth of her child. Her early childhood was characterized by parental quarrels in which Jennie not only participated, but favored her mother. She was resentful and fearful of her father, who punished her for her illegitimate pregnancy by not allowing her to return to the home. After her confinement she met the putative father's mother, who was an understanding woman, capable of giving Jennie the security and acceptance which was lacking in her own home. Moreover, Jennie understood that she would live with his mother if she accepted the putative father's offer of marriage. Since she had no love and little respect for the putative father (she associated him with her cruel father) it is evident that she married him hoping to obtain a childlike security while in his home. From the date of





the marriage until the case was closed upon her receipt of military allotment, Jennie seemed very happy, much calmer and to be adjusting well in her new home.

Her feelings for the baby altered in accordance with her positive or negative reaction to the putative father. Undoubtedly her final acceptance or rejection of the child will coincide with the outcome of the marriage.

Geraldine demonstrated a high degree of stability and maturity as well as genuine interest in the putative father and the children. She was twenty-eight years of age at the time of application for Aid to Dependent Children and the mother of two children, a girl aged four and a boy age two.

After Geraldine's mother died her father held her responsible for the care of the family. There was little cooperation between the members of the family group. She resented her position in the home and her father, for forcing the responsibility of the family upon her. As an expression of her resentment and rejection of the family, she went to live with the putative father. At the time the putative father was as immoral and shiftless as her father. Their relationship, however, matured into true love. Geraldine is proud of the fact that through her influence the putative father discontinued his alcoholic habits and began working steadily. The couple planned to marry as soon as the putative father's divorce from his first wife became final. When their plans were delayed





several months because the father was drafted and later sent overseas, Geraldine, who was secure in her faith in him, obtained private employment to support her children and continued until she could no longer hire someone to care for them. She then applied for and received Aid to Dependent Children. She considered herself married and accepted the putative father. The couple had considered the effect of their marital status upon the children and had protected them by registering their births in the name of the putative father and listed him as the father. Before the end of the study, the putative father was granted a furlough, during which time he married Geraldine.

Mary Brisley has stated that the illegitimate child is "prone to become one of the neurotic personalities of our time - a child subjected to a combination of many adverse environmental influences which produce disturbances in a child's relation to self and others".<sup>1</sup>

Adele's case is unique in that two of her illegitimate children are old enough to express their reaction to their status. Adele was thirty-two years of age when her first child was born in 1927. At the time and for the following years she was supported by the putative father, a married man.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary S. Brisley, "Parent-child relationship in Unmarried Parenthood", Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939, p. 439.





During this time two other children were born. Because of financial reverses the putative father discontinued his support, but continued to live in the home.

In 1940 Adele first received Aid to Dependent Children. At that time the putative father was ordered out of the home by the worker because it was felt that his presence contributed to further immorality. He did not actually leave, although both he and Adele increased their many efforts to deceive not only the community but also the worker. Adele, furthermore, was possessed of a fairly high super ego and her guilt feelings did not decrease with time. She seemed to have a need to punish herself and did so by sacrificing her health for the good care which she gave her children.

In spite of her acceptance of the children, she was not able to meet their emotional needs. The children have reacted very definitely to the long years of deceit and the continuing need to conceal the truth from the community.

The oldest boy felt that it was because of his mother's illicit behavior that the social worker called at the home. In an effort to protect her from further shame, he gave up school, secured private employment and assumed total support of the family. Later he discontinued this plan in favor of returning to school and Adele was again accepted for Aid to Dependent Children.

The second boy demonstrated by his abnormal behavior his





reaction to the insecurity of the home. On two occasions he suffered from mildly severe physical illnesses which proved traumatic to the extent that he demonstrated symptoms of mental breakdown. Psychiatric study revealed the child to be normal. On each occasion it was felt the home was responsible for his inability to adjust to a new situation.

Whether or not the workers, acting within the framework of the Public Assistance Law and Policy, were able to adequately meet the mother's need.

The "need" of the individual seeking application for Public Assistance is the basic requirement for Public Assistance Service. "Need" is further defined as that which is lacking "to maintain a reasonable standard of health and well being", and specifically refers to money deficit.

This section contains the history information obtained for the purpose of establishing "need". Although the Public Assistance application is based on a financial need, the workers are often aware of other needs of the client, which are either basic to, or in addition to the financial need. Furthermore, the worker, well aware of these additional needs, may through "intervention of available community resources, or through direct counseling, "help the client to help himself". Service is given only in connection with those needs which are

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#### CHAPTER IV. -- DISCUSSION.

The purpose of this thesis, as set forth in Chapter I, is to determine: (a) What personality characteristics or environmental circumstances seemed to predispose the women studied to their illegitimate pregnancy; (b) What problems in treatment these women presented to the Public Assistance Agency; (c) Whether or not the workers, acting within the framework of the Public Assistance Law and Policy, were able to adequately meet the mother's need.

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Public Assistance Service Manual, Chapter II, "Determining Need", Sec.-Introduction, p.1. (see appendix, p.83)





client recognizes and only in the amount which the client desires.<sup>1</sup>

If the client chose to confine the contact with Public Assistance to the financial problem, the record seldom gave history material adequate for a fair determination of the first purpose of this thesis, namely, the personality characteristics or environmental circumstances which seemed to predispose the women to illegitimacy. Even in those cases in which the women requested help with problems of a financial nature, the background history was sketchy as it was not always necessary in order to meet the client's request. Furthermore, the Public Assistance Agency considers the client as the primary source of information. Collateral visits to relatives, or others, may prove helpful to both client and agency, but such visits are not made unless the client gives his consent.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion of personality characteristics of the girls is, therefore, difficult from such material as the girls were able or felt the need to discuss with the worker.

The cases presented are examples of the total group and demonstrate certain common problems which seemed to have

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Public Assistance Service Manual, Chapter II, "Determining Need", Sec-Introduction, p.1. (see Appendix p.1)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Section-Income and Resources, p.13. (see appendix p.11).





provided the basis of the girls' illegitimate pregnancy.

At the time of the birth of the first child, seven of the girls were between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, inclusive; fifteen were between twenty-two and twenty-five, inclusive and nine were between twenty-six and thirty-six, inclusive. Fourteen of the women studied had borne a second illegitimate child. Of these fourteen, seven were between the ages of twenty and twenty-two, inclusive; five were between twenty-five and twenty-nine, inclusive; and two were over thirty years of age. Three women gave birth to a third illegitimate child. All three were between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-six. One woman gave birth to a fourth child at the age of twenty-six; and one to a fifth child at the age of thirty. The age at which two of the women gave birth to their children is not known since the Aid to Dependent Children record contained no mention of the mother's age.

During the adolescent period of the child he shows some conflict indicative of the final maturing of the sex organs. At this period, also, the child completes his emotional emancipation from his parents. If his early adjustment with the parents has been good and the super ego developed during the early childhood will allow normal expression of impulses, the adolescent period will not cause undue difficulty and the child will be able to accept the normal mores and restrictions of





<sup>1</sup>  
society.

Since most of these girls were chronologically in late adolescence, they should have been able to have handled their hetrosexual contacts in accordance with established mores. The fact that they did not, indicates that, emotionally these girls were not as mature as the average normal girls of the same age.

The comparison between the number of women who gave birth to their first child and the number who applied for Aid to Dependent Children at a given age, is interesting. Four women first received Aid to Dependent Children between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, inclusive; thirteen were between nineteen and twenty-one, inclusive; sixteen were between twenty two and twenty-five, inclusive and three were between the ages of thirty-seven and fifty, inclusive. In two cases the record of Aid to Dependent Children does not indicate the age.

These figures would indicate that the younger woman either worked for a time after the birth of her child or was able to obtain support in some other way. Aid to Dependent Children thus appears to have represented a final resort. This fact agrees with the mothers' statements as recorded in the Aid to Dependent Children records.

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<sup>1</sup> O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H. J. Pearson, Common Neuroses of Children and Adults. pp. 46-51. New York; W. W. Morton & Company, Incorporated. 1937.





Sixteen of the girls came from homes broken by death of either the mother or the father. In two cases both parents were deceased. An additional eight of these girls' parents were separated by reasons other than death. In these cases the opportunity for the girls' normal development (through the Oedipus situation) was interfered with. In general, the records do not indicate the girls' immediate reactions to the childhood catastrophe. There are exceptions; notably, Geraldine, who, after the death of her mother, resented the fact that her father thrust upon her the responsibility of the home, as well as the care of the younger children. She left the home to live with the putative father as a conscious expression of her resentment toward her father.

Seventeen of the girls came from unbroken homes. These homes, however, did not meet the needs of the growing girl. Little is known of the actual parental relationship. In only two cases is it known that the parents quarrelled bitterly.

From the records it is indicated that extreme domination over the family by one parent was in a very large measure responsible for conflict which the girl seemed to be trying to solve by illegitimate pregnancy. In this respect the girls from the homes broken by death or separation of the parents, showed a tendency to parallel the reaction patterns of the girls from the unbroken homes which were dominated by one parent. For example: five of the girls living in broken homes





were well aware of the father because he was recognized by all members of the family as head and in this position supervised the members in all of their plans, as did the father of Sylvia. Audry, Josephine, Beatrice and Jennie all experienced fear of their father and said he was cruel, dominating and did not understand them.

These girls, in spite of their attitude toward their father, seemed to gain whatever acceptance and emotional support they needed from their mother. On the other hand, the remaining girls in the group seemed to lack, or resent, their mother, or both parents, since they turned to older sisters for the sympathy, understanding and protection which their parents did not give them. Since most of these older sisters were apparently secure in their marriages, it is possible that the clients were identifying with these sisters in a childlike attempt to escape the unhappy home.

In three cases the parents (two fathers and one mother) remarried after a period of time, in which the parent and client lived alone. The remarriage seemed to break whatever constructive ties existed between the client and parent. Furthermore the client had a tendency to interpret the remarriage as rejection by the loved parent.

Both Mary and Elizabeth ( the two examples given) seemed to use their illegitimate pregnancy as a way of identifying with the rejecting parent and also as a means of punishing





the parent for the rejection.

Five of the girls were reared by foster parents. These girls were noticeably more unaware of the implications of the situation in which they found themselves than those girls who had contact with their own parents. In order to preserve their own social integrity, the foster parent was more prone to reject the girl at the very time when she most needed acceptance and understanding.

<sup>1</sup>  
In 1917 Mr. Kammerer made a study of five hundred unmarried mothers. He devoted a chapter each to "Bad Environment", "Bad Companions" and "Recreational Disadvantages". The chapter headings are indicative of the points which Mr. Kammerer was making and he believed that each of the above conditions are responsible for the girls' becoming pregnant.

Poor neighborhood is stressed in the cases of Rena and Christine. While these conditions undoubtedly played a part in the girls' social adjustment, a review of the cases indicates that even more important was the emotional difficulty centering around the girls' parental adjustment. It is the writer's opinion that lack of wholesome recreation was at least partially responsible for the difficulty in more than the two cases indicated. The writer also believes that constructive recreation within the limited finances of these girls could have helped to relieve some of the tensions

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Gamble Kammerer, The Unmarried Mother, A Study of 500 Cases. Criminal Science Monograph, No. 3, Little, Brown & Co. 1918, pp. 35-76

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In 1919 Mr. Kewster made a study of five hundred married mothers. He devoted a chapter each to "Bad Environment", "Bad Conditions", and "Neurotic and Abnormalities". The chapter headings are indicative of the points which Mr. Kewster was making and he believed that each of the above conditions are responsible for the girls' mental problems.

Footnote: It is stressed in the case of Jane and Christine. While these conditions undoubtedly played a part in the girls' social adjustment, a review of the case indicates that even more important was the emotional difficulty centering around the girls' mental adjustment. It is the writer's opinion that lack of emotional recognition was at least partially responsible for the difficulty. In both the two cases indicated, the writer also believes that constructive assistance within the limited framework of these girls could have helped to relieve some of the tension.



tormenting these girls and would have left them free to develop constructive outlets for their energy.

It is known that parents of two of the girls were immoral and that Dorothy, herself, was an illegitimate child. However, these do not seem to have been the immediate causes of the illegitimate pregnancy as each of the girls experienced difficulty in their parental relationships.

Since only Eleanor claimed she was raped, it is obvious that these girls wanted their pregnancy and that it had real meaning to them, even if it increased, rather than minimized their problems.

The meaning of the child to the mother is almost as varied as the number of cases. All of the mothers studied kept at least some of the children and there is, therefore, an element of acceptance. Sixteen of the women gave birth to more than one child. Of this group four rejected one or more of their illegitimate children, but kept the remainder. The records do not reveal the reasons for the discrimination.

The psychiatric study made by Kasanin and Handschin<sup>1</sup> revealed that the women who kept their children were aggressive. This is true in the case of most of the women included in this study and is particularly true in the cases of Elaine,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kasanin and Sieglunde Handschin, "Psycho-dynamic Factors in Illegitimacy", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. XI, No. 1, January 1941, p. 79





Sylvia, Evelyn and Ann.

Coupled with this basic personality trait is the fact that the illegitimate pregnancy and the child had a definite meaning or could be specifically used for the mother's unconscious satisfaction - that is, punishing her parents, alliance with a member of the family, using the child as a source of attention, etc.

In general the girls presented no severe reactions to their children. Some of them, as Christine, were so immature and so dominated by their mothers that they were unable to make their own decisions in the disposition of the child.

Others, as Audry, were too completely confused and bewildered by the experience to be able to make any plans whatsoever. Although these girls kept their children and gave them good care, they needed a great deal of support and help in understanding the meaning of the illegitimacy to them.

Rose was an example of the physically mature girl who has not been able to work through the Oedipus complex completely. She seems to regard the child as a tangible evidence that she was able to compete successfully with her mother by having a baby.

Some of the girls used the children as a weapon in battle with their parents. Sylvia is an example; she clung to the child in the face of her father's rejection of her and the child as the only way in which she could obtain her eman-





cipation from the home.

Catherine, whose mother died and father deserted, leaving her to be reared by a strict non-relative, seemed to regard the child as her first real possession - one which tended to compensate for the insecurities and hardships of her childhood.

At least three of the women so closely related the child to the putative father, that their feelings toward both were the same. Geraldine loved the putative father and was secure in her relationship to him, therefore she was able to accept her children on a mature level. On the other hand, Josephine was ambivalent in her feelings concerning the putative father. The parallel of these feelings was seen in her attitude toward the child.

Three of the fifty women studied were married during the study. However, only one, Geraldine, accepted marriage on a mature adult level. Mary and Jenny demonstrated little conception of the responsibilities of marriage; rather, they regarded it as the easiest and most socially acceptable solution of the problem in which they found themselves.

Eight of the women lived with the father of their children, but did not marry. Esther and Adele chose men who were already married; Mildred and Stella chose men who were not interested in marriage; Blanche finally maintained that she was married but could produce no verification of this; Hattie did not reveal her true status until after the putative father





had died. At the end of the study Pearl was still trying to marry the putative father; Beatrice refused marriage even though the putative father offered to marry her.

At some time during their contact with the workers, most of the girls expressed some guilt arising from their relationship to the putative father. Generally, they were uninterested in the putative father and knew very little of him. Except in the cases mentioned above, the girls' contact with the putative fathers covered a relatively short period of time and had rapidly progressed to the sexual intercourse, and following impregnation the relationship had been abruptly broken, either by the girl herself, or the putative father.

Twenty-one of the putative fathers were service men, who were selfish in their demands. Usually the girl's contact with the serviceman was of a shorter duration, but was intensified in comparison to the ordinary romance. Both the unmarried mother and the service man seemed to grasp the hysteria of war as a means through which their separate needs could be met.

Most of the girls were not interested in pressing paternity proceedings. They were encouraged to do so by the worker and some of the girls, in an effort to please the worker, went through the motions of requesting support from the putative father. Two of the women, however, used this method, pressing paternity proceedings, as a way of punishing themselves and

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Most of the girls were not interested in becoming parents. They were encouraged to do so by the worker and some of the girls, in an effort to please the worker, went through the motions of coitus with the putative father. Two of the women, however, used this method, presenting a hysterical presentation, as a way of punishing themselves and



the putative father and thereby satisfying their guilt feelings.

The average unmarried mother found in this study is a girl between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five, who has experienced a very unhappy home life. She is emotionally immature and insecure in her relationships with her parents, and, to a lesser degree, with friends. She becomes illegitimately pregnant in a final effort to solve her problems or to compensate for her childhood unhappiness. She is not interested in the putative father and has a tendency to regard her child as her possession; something which she uses to further her battle with her parents, or as a means of securing those things in life which she is seeking - love, affection, security and protection.

If the future welfare of the mother and her child is to be safeguarded, she must be helped to become a better, adequate<sup>1</sup> more self-sufficient person.

The second purpose of this thesis is to consider the problems in treatment which these women presented to the Public Assistance Agency.

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<sup>1</sup> Erma C. Blethen, "Case Work Service to a Florence Crittenden Home", The Family, Vol. XXIII, No. 7, November 1942 p. 251.





Public Assistance Service is everything we do in the Agency-; informing the individual about the agency; providing financial assistance; listening to the individual's statements and helping him to determine what his next step will be; understanding his problem and rendering service and utilizing community resources; by enabling payment and making money available and by helping him obtain technical, medical, vocational advice, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Mary was the only girl psychometrically tested. She was found to be dull normal and to have some emotional instability. In five other cases the workers felt that the girls were below average in intelligence, but since the girls were not tested, it is not to be considered a reliable judgment. The unmarried mothers studied, therefore, may be said to be intellectually capable of accepting whatever treatment is offered.

The factors in poor parental relationship, emotional immaturity, which precipitated the girls into the illegal sex act were the very problems which the girls brought to their contact with Public Assistance. Just as these girls were unable to establish rapport with relatives and friends, so they experienced difficulty in establishing constructive relationship with the workers.

To many persons a State Agency represents authority. Many of these girls were already in conflict with authority (parent) they were, therefore, fearful of becoming too confidential with the workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Public Assistance Service Manual, Chapter I, "Public Assistance Service" p.2.





In a Public Assistance agency the money payment is a primary source of treatment. Some of these girls had received Public Assistance as a member of their parents' family several years before their application for Aid to Dependent Children. The exact number is not known. During the years which had intervened, the Public Assistance program had changed and many services other than the money payment were now available. The first problem, however, which the unmarried mother brought to the agency was a financial need and it is for assistance with this problem that she applied to the agency.

The unmarried mother may have requested this service herself because she was no longer able to meet her financial needs, as for example, Geraldine, who applied because she was no longer able to work due to her difficulty in obtaining a girl to care for the children; or the mother may have sought Aid to Dependent Children as a way of completing her emancipation, as did Evelyn, who gave up her job in favor of Aid to Dependent Children so that she could be with and care for her children herself.

Contrasted to this type of person are the few, as Sylvia, who took little interest in the application other than to accompany the parent to the agency office and sign the application under the direction of the parent.

Other examples of the effect of money payment in treatment follow: the money payment bought Katherine's acceptance

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Other examples of the effect of money payment in treatment follow: the money payment bought Katherine's acceptance



in her aunt's home; the cases of Sylvia, Audry, Sarah, Mary, Dolores, are examples of the use of the money payment in relieving family tensions and of relaxing the parents' punitive attitudes to the extent that the girl was able to continue in her relationship with her parents.

Through the use of the money payment Claire was helped to establish a home and by so doing complete the emancipation from her parents which she had begun by having the illegitimate child.

Evelyn, by receipt of Public Assistance, was able to accept the children for the first time since they had been born in 1933 and 1938.

Money payment was not a panacea; although it may have relieved the family tensions, it may have enabled the girl to act out further the meaning which the pregnancy held to her. For example: Sarah was able to remain secure in her father's house and at the same time continue her childhood fantasy of the complete family unit with herself in the position of wife and mother.

Ruth Brenner in her article on case work service to<sup>1</sup> unmarried mothers stresses the importance of realistic money planning in which the mother's needs are taken into consideration. She further states that in order for the mother to maintain her hard won emotional growth, adequate amounts should

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth F. Brenner, "Case Work Service for Unmarried Mothers" The Family, Part II, Vol. XXII, No. 8, December 1941, pp. 274-275.





be included, not only for maintenance, but also enough for good clothes and adequate, wholesome recreation, etc.

In each of the Aid to Dependent Children payments of these mothers an amount was included for clothing and incidentals. In spite of this nearly all of the mothers complained that they were unable to provide themselves with adequate clothing and could enjoy little recreation. The workers recognized this to be a real problem to the mothers, one which they were unable to correct, because, due to the limited Public Assistance appropriation for the year 1945, the standards of assistance were somewhat lower than the actual cost of living. However, in all cases where the mother experienced difficulty in budgeting, the worker spent long hours in interpretation of agency policies and in trying to help the mothers improve their planning ability and thereby make the best use of her Aid to Dependent Children payment.

Although Public Assistance was able to give additional service, these girls had a tendency to confine their relationship with the Agency to the financial problem. In addition, relatively few sought assistance with their emotional problems from other agencies while they were receiving Aid to Dependent Children. This would indicate that the girls did not consciously realize their emotional struggle and that it could be realized and handled only after a close and continuing relationship with an understanding worker.

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In those cases in which Aid to Dependent Children had been received prior to 1945 and were reopened in 1945, or which were accepted early in 1945, and in which continuing contact with the mother existed there was evidence that the workers were gradually able to help the mother consciously realize and understand her emotional difficulties. The mother thus needed time, the length varying according to the individual mother, to gain sufficient confidence in themselves and the workers to be able to accept the help in working through their problems which the workers were able and ready to give.

History material sufficient to establish eligibility for the money payment is the first responsibility of the social worker. However, all of the case records gave at least a hint of the deeper emotional problems. The workers were, therefore, able to establish rapport with each of the girls and to give them the opportunity of sharing with the worker, through discussion, the burden of their problems.

The records indicate further that the workers were well aware of the girls' immaturity and inability to plan realistically and that considerable effort was made to free the girls from the insecurities and resentments which bound them to their inability to work out satisfying modes of living.

Elaine (p.28) is an excellent example of the way in which the worker was able to help the mother work through her problems. The agency contact with Elaine covered a period of

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three years. A large portion of the contact was spent in helping Elaine gain confidence in herself so that she was able to discuss her problems on a conscious level and thereby obtain understanding to work through to the solution of her problems.

Since process recording is not always used by Public Assistance workers in Rhode Island, the workers actually accomplished a great deal more in the way of releasing these girls from their emotional tensions than the record would indicate.

The third question is, "Were the workers, acting within the framework of the Public Assistance Law and policy, able to adequately meet the mother's need?"

As has been previously stated the Public Assistance Law is to "provide that access to Public Assistance shall be available to any person in Rhode Island who is in need".<sup>1</sup> However, the philosophy and policy accompanying the law provides for practically every need of the individual.<sup>2</sup> Thus the mother's rights as an individual, her basic human needs, as well as her individual needs are provided through the Public Assistance program.

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<sup>1</sup> State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Department of Social Welfare, Division of Public Assistance, Public Assistance Act of 1944, Chap. 1505, Public Laws, 1944, p. 2

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Public Assistance Service Manual, Ch. I, Public Assistance Service, p. 1. (see appendix ii)





Mrs. Blethen has stated that the case worker's job is "to give the unmarried mother strength, through the worker's acceptance and understanding, to better face with reality her problems and to better understand herself; to help the mother work out a plan which she can accept and be responsible for. This gives the girl an opportunity to become a more mature, self-sufficient and responsible person".<sup>1</sup>

By this criteria the needs of Elaine (p.28) were met in what may be considered an adequate manner. On the other hand, Sylvia, (p.30) wished to establish a home for herself and her child, and in nearly every interview she renewed her request. Sylvia's father was extremely resentful of the baby and wished Sylvia to place the child. The worker, although she valiantly tried to encourage the father to accept the reality of Sylvia's baby, so completely allied herself with the father that Sylvia's request was never accepted and to the end of the study she remained at home, where she was denied the privilege of even caring for her own child. In this case the worker failed to help the mother "work out a plan which she could accept and be responsible for".

<sup>2</sup>  
Ruth Brenner outlines two types of agencies: (1) the mul-

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<sup>1</sup> Erma C. Blethen, "CaseWork Service to a Florence Crittenden Home", The Family, November 1942, Vol. XXIII, No. 7, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth F. Brenner, "What Facilities are Adequate to the Care of the Unmarried Mother", Proceedings of the National conference of Social Work, Columbia University Press, 1942, pp. 437-438.





multiple function agency in which the client sees one worker who is in a position to handle whatever problem the mother may present, including placement of the child; (2) that agency which maintains close coordination with other agencies. In this case the mother is referred to another agency only if necessary and then after proper preparation.

Few of the cases studied were active with agencies other than Public Assistance. The girls thus had a tendency to use Public Assistance as a multiple function agency, while in reality the needs of the unmarried mother could have been met, in a greater proportion of the cases, if the mother and the worker had considered the agency to be of the second type.

In practice the Public Assistance Agency in Rhode Island may be considered a combination of the two types of agencies as outlined by Miss Brenner.

Doris was simultaneously active with Public Assistance and the Probation Department. The record, however, indicates little actual cooperation between the two workers, which may be one reason why Doris showed no improvement. Rena was known to Aid to Dependent Children and Juvenile Court at the same time. In this case there was close agency cooperation, and the Public Assistance worker under direction of the Juvenile Court was acting as the social worker representing both the Court and Public Assistance.

The amount of inter-agency cooperation possible varied greatly from area to area throughout the State.

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greatly from area to area throughout the State.



In Providence there was opportunity for a variety of special services to be offered, whereas in the rural sections available services were limited, either because they did not exist or because of the handicap of transportation. For example: psychometric testing was available throughout the State, although it was sometimes necessary to transport the client to Providence in order to utilize the available facility. Out-patient psychiatric treatment was even more limited and for areas other than Providence and Westerly, transportation was necessary. The reality of the need for transportation can be very limiting, especially if the client experiences any resistance to the testing or treatment.

It is interesting to note that none of the mothers who were thought by the workers to have a low level of intelligence were tested psychometrically. According to the records plans for testing were made for only one of the group, Dorothy, (20), who so feared the tests that she refused to keep three appointments made for her.

<sup>1</sup>  
Miss Brenner in the same article states that only those workers who are skilled, mature and experienced and those who are free from moral judgments should be assigned to work with unmarried mothers.

The records indicate that in a densely populated section

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<sup>1</sup> Brenner, op. cit. pp.438-439.





of one area Miss Brenner's plan was followed. This worker showed a remarkable ability to understand and accept the unmarried mothers and general progress was noted. Since Public Assistance workers in Rhode Island carry an intergrated case load of four types of assistance, such selection of the workers is impossible. The individual worker's case load averages at least one hundred cases, thus the worker of necessity must limit the time which she is able to give to the individual client. This limitation of time results in slowing down or preventing the unmarried mother from transferring enough of her problems upon the worker so that she is free to become a more mature and self-sufficient person.

It has been the writer's experience that if the client (including the unmarried mother) experiences a fairly rapid succession of different workers, the client is not able to establish a sufficiently strong relationship with the individual worker to be able to make the transferences necessary to attain her (the unmarried mother's) much needed maturity; also in the writer's opinion this is part of the reason why the unmarried mothers had a tendency to confine their contact with the worker to the financial level. The remainder of the reason, in the writer's opinion, rests with the worker, who, because of her large case load, cannot give the mother the full amount of time required to fully explore the mother's emotions

The worker is required by law to establish eligibility





or continued eligibility, therefore the worker has a tendency to confine her contact to the financial problems. This does not mean that the worker is unaware of the emotional problems. As the study indicates, the workers were well aware of the problems presented by the client and were able through their understanding and acceptance to help these unmarried mothers to work through many of their problems. For complete compliance with Mrs. Blethen's criteria, (p.70) there should be more adequately trained staff, which is comparatively stable in its placements, and smaller case loads.

Because of these circumstances some of the girls found it difficult to adequately work through the Oedipus situation with the result that the girl was not mature enough to adequately handle her normal sex impulses. These girls, immature emotionally, apparently entered into the illicit sex act in an unconscious effort to solve their emotional problems, or to prove their maturity to their parents.

Financial reverses were mentioned by many of the girls





## CHAPTER V. -- CONCLUSIONS.

The Purpose of this study is threefold:

First: to determine what personality characteristics or environmental circumstances seemed to predispose these women to their illegitimate pregnancy.

Unhappy family relationships seemed basic to the problems of each girl. During childhood the girls were deprived of love, security and understanding guidance because the home was broken due to one of the following circumstances:

Sixteen of the girls experienced the death of one parent while two of the girls lost both parents through death; eight of these girls grew up in homes broken by separation or divorce of their parents; in an unknown number of cases the home remained physically intact but one parent dominated the home. In these cases in which the domination approached completion, the girl had little awareness of the other parent.

Because of these circumstances some of the girls found it difficult to adequately work through the Oedipus situation with the result that the girl was not mature enough to adequately handle her normal sex impulses.<sup>1</sup> These girls, immature emotionally, apparently entered into the illicit sex act in an unconscious effort to solve their emotional problems, or to prove their maturity to their parents.

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<sup>1</sup> Supra p.5





as being responsible for the denial of normal, healthy, social activity during their childhood. It is difficult to state the specific number of cases in which financial reverses have a definite relationship to the illegitimacy because not all of the records contained detailed history concerning the unmarried mother's childhood experiences.

Two of the girls stated that they lacked money with which to purchase wholesome recreation and for this reason had resorted to the illicit sex act. Undoubtedly lack of adequate funds for wholesome recreation was in a small way responsible for the girls' difficulty in more than the two cases mentioned. Since family difficulty is also present, the writer believes that this, rather than financial need, is the underlying cause of the illegitimate pregnancy.

The second purpose of the thesis is to determine what problems in treatment these women brought to the Public Assistance Agency. The one problem common to each of the mothers studied was the financial need.

In addition, the mothers presented certain other outstanding problems. The most important of these were as follows: (1) Because of the girl's illegal behavior she had been accused and rejected by her family, friends and neighbors. She therefore needed to be reaccepted as a person and looked to the Public Assistance Worker for this reacceptance. The intensity of her need in this area depended upon the degree





to which she had been rejected as well as the girl's guilt feelings concerning the illegitimate pregnancy and the child.

(2) Many of these girls continued to remain at home with their parents. In these cases the parental relationships which were partially or wholly responsible for the girl's difficulty needed to be worked through before the girl could achieve the emotional maturity for which she was striving. In other instances the girls lived with relatives other than parents. For these girls, also, the family problem was a major concern.

(3) With few exceptions the girls needed assistance in clarifying their feelings concerning the baby.

The third purpose of this thesis is to determine whether or not the workers, acting within the framework of the Public Assistance Law and policy were able to meet adequately the mothers' need.

The financial need of the mother was met according to the Standards of Assistance as provided by Public Assistance. Unfortunately the Standards of Assistance were limited and careful planning was required if the mother was to live within the money provided her. The workers were well aware of this limitation and a large proportion of nearly every record is devoted to the recording of frequent detailed discussions of the budget and the many tangible ways in which the worker attempted to help the mother better utilize or improve her ability to manage financially.





The Public Assistance worker was aware of the additional problems presented in the preceeding paragraphs.

The writer believes that the workers recognized their responsibility to accept the unmarried mother as a person and endeavored to do this in each of the cases studied.

In some cases the acceptance on the part of the worker gave the mother sufficient strength to establish herself in her own home, or re-establish herself in her parents' home, and to accept and care for her child on a mature adult level. However, the ability of the mother to utilize, constructively, the acceptance by the worker depended in a large measure upon the ability of the worker to help the girl understand and work through her family relationships as well as her feelings concerning her baby.

The workers were aware of some of these problems and some of the workers handled the problems well and successfully. Generally, however, this seemed to be the area in which the workers experienced most difficulty. The reasons for some of the worker's partial failure to meet, adequately, the needs presented by the unmarried mother seem to the writer to be as follows:

The large case load which the individual worker carried prevented her from spending sufficient time with the unmarried mother to give her the support necessary to enable the mother to understand and accept her emotional reactions and to reconstruct on a more mature level her relationships with





family and community;

The use of community resources became progressively less as the section of the state in which the mother lived became more isolated;

Psychiatric and psychometric services were rarely used for two reasons: (1) both services are somewhat limited in Rhode Island; (2) some workers needed help in understanding the value of the services.

Medical Clinic service was generally used in urban areas where transportation was readily available.

Although the services of other agencies such as Family Welfare and Child Placement were generally limited to the urban areas, these agencies readily extended their services to the unmarried mother whose need was called to their attention.

From this study of fifty unmarried mothers receiving Aid to Dependent Children in Rhode Island during the year 1945, the writer finds that the mothers' basic problems were related to their unsatisfactory family relationships. The financial need of the mother was the immediate problem with which she sought assistance through her application to Public Assistance. Additional problems were presented to the agency, including the mother's need for re-acceptance as a person; for assistance in working through to more satisfying parental and family relationships and for help in planning for the baby.

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Both financial assistance and case work services were available to the unmarried mothers. Financial assistance, usually in the form of money payment, was payable to the mother concurrent with her need as determined by the somewhat limited Standards of Assistance as provided by Public Assistance. The law and policy were sufficiently flexible to provide case work services to meet the special emotional needs of the unmarried mother. Actual availability of these services was restricted to some extent by the excessive case loads of the social workers. In certain cases other available community resources were utilized. The effectiveness of the case work services is indicated by the number of mothers who were able to become more mature, responsible persons, better able to work through their problems to a way of living more satisfactory to themselves and more beneficial to their children.

Approved,

*Richard K. Conant*

Richard K. Conant  
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According to the Public Assistance Act of 1944, "each state that which is lacking 'an adequate and reasonable standard of health and well-being.' Specifically, need is, in our public assistance program, the difference between the total costs of a recognized range of the material requirements of a given family and the amount of income received by and available to the family for meeting these costs. Before the difference can be computed, resources and income are evaluated in terms of standards which are properly established and which can be set within the appropriations granted by the legislature who represents the general public, who, in taxes, pay for the program.

With our fundamental objective of providing constructive public assistance service we have concern for the problems of the individual, both those that come within and those that may be outside of the agency function. The whole process of establishing initial and continuing needs for public assistance service is seen to require the





## APPENDIX.

Excerpts from the Rhode Island Public Assistance Service Manual:

### The Purpose of the Public Assistance Act.

The Public Assistance Act of 1944, Chapter 1505, Public Laws 1944, states that it is the purpose of the Act to provide that "access to public assistance shall be available to any person residing in Rhode Island who is in need". This provision insures the right of the individual to apply for public assistance. The "need" of the individual making application for public assistance is the basic requirement for public assistance service. The functioning of the public assistance agency must be based, therefore, on a sound and uniform understanding of need in which is embodied that degree of flexibility which strives for the consideration of individual differences in physical makeup, in psychological needs and in standards of living.

### Definition of "Need".

According to the Public Assistance Act of 1944, "need" means that which is lacking "to maintain a reasonable standard of health and well being." Specifically, need is, in our public assistance program, the difference between the total costs of a recognized range of the material requirements of a given family and the amount of income received by and available to the family for meeting these costs. Before the difference can be computed, requirements and income are evaluated in terms of standards which are properly established and which can be met within the appropriations granted by the legislature who represents the general public, who, in taxes, pay for the program.

With our fundamental objective of providing constructive public assistance service we have concern for the problems of the individual, both those that come within and those that may be met outside of the agency function. The whole process of establishing initial and continuing needs for public assistance service is seen to require the





full use of staff skill. Developing and maintaining the assistance plan in itself offers opportunity for conserving and developing resources and strengths in the family situation.

Service becomes an inherent part of the establishment of need as workers become more aware of needs other than, and frequently basic to, those met by the money payment, for which application was made. Problems of children manifest themselves; problems in household management and the sharing of responsibility of individual members of the family for it may be apparent; health problems may need to be alleviated despite adequacy of the assistance payment. The worker, through interpretation of available community resources, or through direct counselling, can help the family to develop the capacity, or to continue to take responsibility, for planning for themselves - may "help the family to help themselves." The giving of this service must be consistent with the rights and needs of the individual as he sees them; the family receiving assistance must be free to choose whether they wish this help. Many public assistance workers need help in clarifying this aspect of their responsibility. We have a natural and desirable concern for the total welfare of the people whom we serve. As we develop ability to individualize and learn how people use help, we will become more skillful in identifying problems and in giving service as it is desired -- the only acceptable basis for service from a public assistance agency.

#### Income and Resources.

As always, the applicant is the primary source of information, and routine contacting of relatives, either by visit, telephone or correspondence, is not indicated. Often routine contact jeopardizes such interest and cooperation as already exists and which are the only real basis for either economic support or for aid in planning in other ways with or for the applicant. Agency purpose including relatives in a consideration of the applicant's situation is twofold: (1) to enlist relatives in helping the applicant work out the problems which confront him and (2) as a source of information to which the applicant may refer the worker, or contact with whom may be indicated by the applicant and/or worker.

#### 1. The Parents

(a) present relationships with parents

(b) parents' attitude toward the worker





SCHEDULE

- |                          |            |          |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|
| 1. Case Name             | No.        | Religion |
| 2. Birth Date            | Birthplace | Sex      |
| 3. Date of Child's Birth |            |          |

**EARLY BACKGROUND:**

1. Social and Financial Status of parents during the mother's childhood in the community in which they lived.
2. Were both parents living during the mother's early childhood?
3. Did either parent die during mother's childhood?
  - (a) which parent?
  - (b) Mother's reaction to death of parent.
4. Siblings: number                      sex
  - (a) Attitude toward each other
5. Education: grade attained

**EMPLOYMENT:**

1. At what age did the mother enter private employment?
2. What financial arrangements were made with regard to wages?
  - (a) did she give her parents all of her wages
  - (b) did she receive an allowance
  - (c) did she pay board at home or elsewhere
3. Employment record: does this give a clue to her personality, i.e., did she work steadily or change jobs frequently, etc.

**ATTITUDES:**

1. With parents
  - (a) present relationship with parents
  - (b) parents' attitude toward the mother.

## SCHEDULE

1. Case Name No. Religion

2. Birth Date Birthplace Sex

3. Date of Child's Birth

## EARLY BACKGROUND:

1. Social and Personal Status of parents during the mother's childhood in the community in which they lived.

2. Were both parents living during the mother's early childhood?

3. Did either parent die during mother's childhood?

(a) which parent?

(b) Mother's reaction to death of parent.

4. Siblings: number sex

(a) Attitude toward each other

5. Education: Grade attained

## EMPLOYMENT:

1. At what age did the mother enter private employment?

2. What financial arrangements were made with regard to wages?

(a) Did she give her parents all of her wages?  
(b) Did she receive an allowance?  
(c) Did she pay board at home or elsewhere?

3. Employment record: Does she give a clue to her personality, i.e., did she work steadily or change jobs frequently, etc.

## ATTITUDES:

1. With parents

(a) present relationship with parents  
(b) parents' attitude toward the mother.



2. With siblings:

- (a) present relationship
- (b) siblings attitude toward the mother

3. With putative father

4. With child

- (a) acceptance
- (b) rejection
- (c) other
- (d) does mother evidence need for help in understanding her attitude toward her child?
- (e) if so, what help was offered?
- (f) to what extent was the mother able to use this help?

FINANCIAL:

1. What was mother's reaction toward her application for and receipt of public assistance?
2. Did the mother give evidence of good financial adjustment?
3. If not, what assistance was offered her?
4. To what extent was the mother able to use this assistance?







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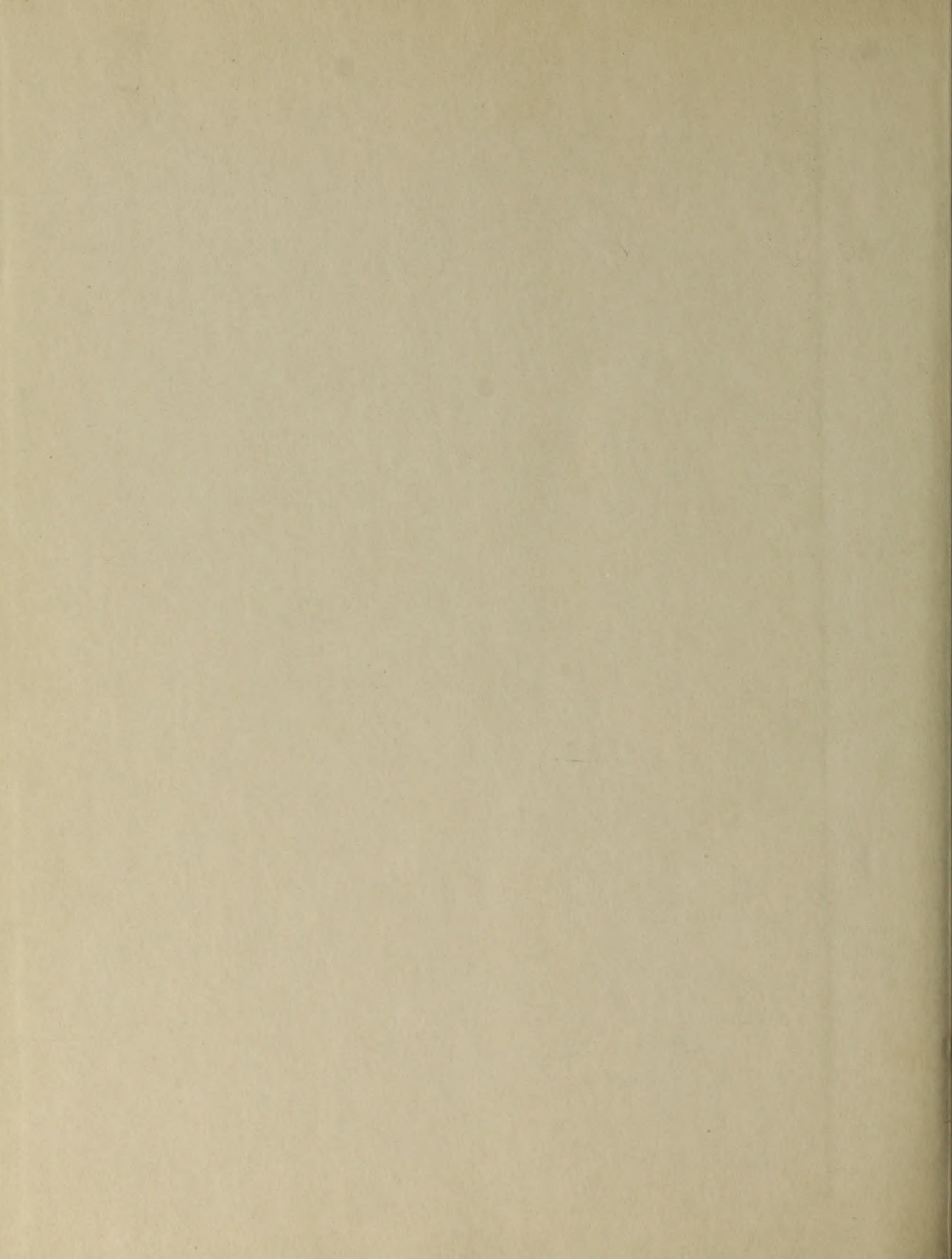














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